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(1992)

OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM

TO: AmEmbassy GEORGETOWN

DATE: October 24, 1978

FROM: Department of State (SCS)

TAGS: CFLD
SUBJECT: Social Security Beneficiaries at "The People's Temple Mission Village in Guyana"

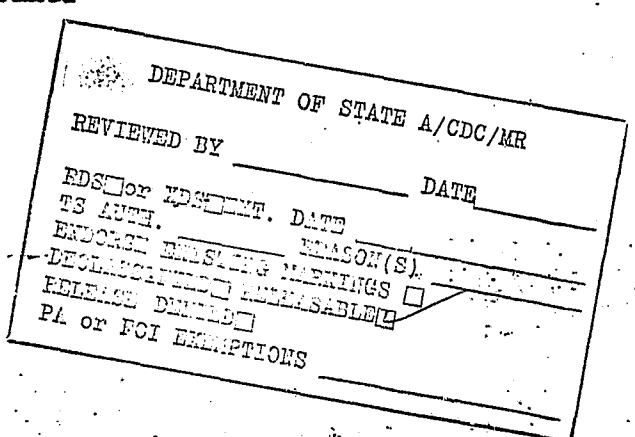
REF:

1. Enclosed for your attention is a copy of a self explanatory letter, with enclosures, from Mr. Ted Girdner, Director, Division of International Operations, Social Security Administration, dated October 13, 1978.

2. The Embassy is instructed to comply with Mr. Girdner's request in this matter to the extent permitted by its resources. Should you, for some reason, not be able to comply, notify the Department by cable.

3. It is suggested that the Embassy be extremely discrete in this matter and that the Department and SSA/DIO be promptly advised of any difficulties or problems that arise or of any pertinent observations.

Cleared: ARA/CAR/Mr. Richard A. McCoy
cc: SSA/DIO/Mr. Ted Girdner



CA:SCS:FSHa:dg

UNCLASSIFIED

FORM 9-81 DS-682

FH

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION
P.O BOX 1756, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21203, U.S.A.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

OCT 25 PM 2 29

BUREAU OF RETIREMENT
AND SURVIVORS INSURANCE

REFER TO:
SPR521

OCT 13 1978

OFFICE OF SPECIAL
CONSULAR SERVICES

Mr. Alan A. Gise
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Overseas Consular Services
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Gise:

We have enclosed copies of prior correspondence between the Division of International Operations and the Consular Section at Georgetown, Guyana, together with an article from the San Francisco Chronicle dated June 15, 1978, concerning the mission village established in Guyana by the Peoples Temple of the Disciples of Christ. Our policy has been and is that we will not do anything that would constitute harassment of the Peoples Temple and its outpost in Guyana. Equally important, our policy has been and is that we will do everything necessary to ensure that beneficiaries are receiving their checks and are free to use the benefits as they see fit; i.e., have not assigned away their right to receive their social security benefits.

After Richard McCoy's visit to the farm in Guyana, we assumed that our beneficiaries were unencumbered in the use of their benefits and that we had no cause to be concerned about the situation there. In light of the more recent allegations which have come to our attention (e.g., the story published in the San Francisco Chronicle on June 15, 1978) we cannot assume that everything there is satisfactory. The specific allegations of: (1) discipline enforced by psychological and physical abuse; and (2) putting a false face forward when visitors come, require us to look further into the matter.

We propose to use the annual enforcement procedure, which involves the annual completion of a questionnaire by each beneficiary outside the United States, and any interim contacts that may be required in the claims process, to verify that each social security beneficiary is alive, free of physical restraint, and able to direct the use of his social security benefits. We request, therefore, that the Embassy at Georgetown from this date obtain each beneficiary report from residents at the mission in a face-to-face contact in a place where privacy is assured, rather than contacting the beneficiary by mail. Each

beneficiary should be required prior to the interview to identify himself with a passport or other equally convincing evidence. The interviewing official should carefully question each beneficiary to ascertain whether he has control of his money. We would appreciate a brief report of each interview at the mission, indicating whether the beneficiary was properly identified, whether he appeared free of physical restraint, and whether he appeared in control of the use of his social security benefits.

Accordingly, please inform the Embassy at Georgetown to undertake personal private interviews, as indicated above, whenever they are requested to contact beneficiaries at the mission or to obtain enforcement questionnaires from them and to route reports of such contacts, together with any forms or other documents obtained, to Post Office Box 7684, Baltimore, Maryland 21207, Attention: Overseas Program Branch.

Sincerely yours,

Ted D. Girdner
Director, Division of
International Operations

Enclosures 4

Ex-Peoples Temple Member

Grim Report From Jungle

By Marshall Kilduff

The Peoples Temple jungle outpost in South America was portrayed yesterday as a remote realm where the church leader, the Rev. Jim Jones, orders public beatings, maintains a squad of 50 armed guards and has involved his 1100 followers in a threat of mass suicide.

This description was provided by Deborah Layton, 25, who was a top aide of Jones until she asked American consular officials 1month to safeguard her departure from Guyana, where the temple has its agricultural mission.

Jones became the center of a storm of controversy last summer when he slipped out of San Francisco with his followers for Guyana. public charges were made by former followers that Jones had performed false medical cures to win converts, that he oversaw beatings of church members in closed meetings and that he amassed more than $5 million in donations.

According to Layton, Jones has become a "paranoid" obsessed with "traitors" in his own ranks who question him or do not work hard enough in the farm fields and with an outside world that has publicized his critics.

The fever-pitch emotions of temple members that allowed Jones to dispatch them to civil rights causes and liberal political rallies in California has now turned to a military-style vigilance against an imminent attack by unspecified "mercenaries," Layton said.

The temple fields are patrolled by two rings of khaki-uniformed armed guards, men and women members of "security alert teams" who have access to 200 to 300 rifles, 25 pistols and a homemade bazooka, Layton said.

Discipline, she said, is handled at public gatherings of the entire church community. On one occasion an elderly woman was humiliated by being forced to strip, younger members are "knuckled" by having fists ground into their foreheads, and others are ordered to an underground "box" where they must sit for day at a time, Layton said.

DEBORAH LAYTON, A FORMER AIDE TO JIM JONES
She told of armed guards and savage discipline

Jones has ringed the work fields with loudspeakers and talks for stretches of up to six hours, she added. Farmhands are expected to work from 5:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. with an hour for lunch and another hour for dinner before more sermons lasting until midnight, Layton said.

The diet consists mostly of rice, purchased in the Guyana capital of Georgetown because the farm is not expected to be self-sufficient for another three years she said.

She said that on the occasion of visits from outsiders whom Jones wished to impress, church members are treated to meat and vegetables. Other trusted followers she claimed were drilled to give optimistic opinions about life at the mission, called Jonestown.

Jones, who often went to elaborate lengths to protect his public image in San Francisco, has remained at the mission, refusing even to venture into Georgetown, she reported.

Among his concerns has been a pending child custody case in the Guyana capital. Former church members Grace and Tim Stoen are seeking a court injunction ordering Jones to return custody of 6-year-old John Stoen, who Jones claims is his natural son by Grace Stoen.

When Guyanese government officials indicated the court was about to rule against him, Jones let the officials know that his entire community would kill themselves, Layton said.

She said the 1100 followers were told to drink a bitter brown liquid potion, after which they supposedly would fall asleep and then be shot by Jones' guards. The rehearsal went as far as having the community drink a phony potion before Jones called it off, Layton added.

Layton said she was able to leave Guyana by wangling a trip to Georgetown. After several days she secretly arranged with American consular officials to obtain an emergency passport and flew to New York on May 23. She is now living in San Francisco.

"Everyone there wants to leave, I'm sure of it," she said. "But you never get a chance to be alone. Everyone is told to spy on other people."

Layton, who was in charge of church finances here before joining the Guyana colony last December, said Jones controls bank accounts in Europe, California and Guyana containing "at least $10 million."

U. of Redlands Post

Mankato, Minn.

Douglas R. Moore announced his resignation yesterday as president of Mankato State University to accept the presidency of University of Redlands in California.

United Pre-

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

FEB 16 1978

IRI-732

Consular Section
Georgetown
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20521

Gentlemen:

Thank you for the comprehensive report on the social security beneficiaries residing at the Mission Village in Georgetown. We are satisfied that there has been no compromise of the rights of these beneficiaries to receive and negotiate their checks for full value.

You have inquired concerning social security beneficiary Robert Johnson, social security number 437-07-0486, who has been in Guyana since August 1977 but has not received any of his checks since his arrival. According to our records, Mr. Johnson executed an agreement on July 8, 1976, for direct deposit of his monthly social security checks to his account with the Bank of Montreal, San Francisco, California. This agreement authorizes the Social Security Administration to draw Mr. Johnson's check at his request in favor of the bank.

Although our records do not indicate that Mr. Johnson has requested termination of this agreement, he may do so at any time by writing to the address on the letterhead. Since it appears that Mr. Johnson may be confused regarding the disposition of his benefit checks, we will continue to send them to the Bank of Montreal—pursuant to his written agreement with the bank—until we receive an unequivocal request from him revoking the direct deposit arrangement. At such time, Mr. Johnson should, of course, make arrangements to receive his checks at another address.

Sincerely yours,

Ted D. Girdner
Director, Division of
International Operations

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Georgetown, Guyana

FEB 1 1978

January 18, 1978

Mr. Ted D. Girdner
Director
Division of International Operations
Social Security Administration
P. O. Box 1756
Baltimore, Maryland 21203

Dear Ted:

I thought that my assignment to Guyana would lessen my activities with SSA, especially after two such active posts as Adana and Zagreb. However, I seem to find myself right in the middle of a problem involving SSA recipients.

I travelled to the People's Temple Mission Village in Guyana's Northwest District on January 11, 1978. I had personal private contact individually and collectively with all the beneficiaries shown on the enclosed form. All are presently residing in the Mission Village and all claimed to receive their social security checks personally. They all stated that they have not signed any written agreement or power of attorney assigning or transferring their monthly social security benefits to the People's Temple organization. They all indicated that they either cash their checks personally or through the assistance of a member of the organization. They denied that they had to turn over the proceeds of their check to the Temple but rather could donate whatever they wanted. None are employed by the People's Temple.

I believe their answers were essentially genuine although probably all social security recipients are influenced to turn over their monthly benefits after their checks are cashed. However, all the pensioners that I saw appear to be adequately housed, fed, and in relatively good health. There are medical facilities at the

Village and community activities for them to participate in. Several mentioned to me that they feel safe at the Village and particularly enjoy the warm climate and the opportunity to fish, garden and pursue other leisure but useful activities.

In short, I am convinced that the People's Temple has not actually forced social security annuitants to sign away their benefits. I can also confirm that is preferable to send the checks through the Mission Village address rather than entrust them to the local unsafe and chaotic mail service.

It may interest you to know that we currently have 78 social security recipients listed at the Embassy who are residing at the Mission Village. I have personally delivered this month's checks to the Village and gave them to a number of the beneficiaries.

I hope the above information clarifies this situation for you. If you have any questions or need any additional information let me know.

I hope you had a very pleasant holiday. Please accept my best wishes.

Sincerely,

Dick

Richard A. Mc Coy
American Consul

c.c. Ambassador
ARA/CAR/GY - Tumminia
SCS/EA - Powers

Enclosure:
List of social security recipients residing at the Mission Village.

N. B.
One of the beneficiaries listed a Mr. Robert Johnson SSN 437-09-0486, has been in Guyana since approximately last August and has not received any of his benefit checks since his arrival. I would appreciate your checking into the reason for the delay.

30 JAN 1978

Georgetown, Guyana

January 18, 1978

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Director
Division of International Operations
Social Security Administration
P. O. Box 1756
Baltimore, Maryland 21203

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DEI RTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATIO ND WELFARE

DEC 19 1977

IRI-732

Consular Section
Georgetown
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20521

Gentlemen:

Since August 1977, at least 13 social security beneficiaries have left the San Francisco, California, area to settle in Guyana. All currently receive their social security checks at the same mailing address; viz, care of Mission Village, Box 893, Georgetown, Guyana. The address is that of an agricultural mission and residential community operated by the Peoples Temple of the Disciples of Christ and was requested for use by the beneficiaries because mail delivery to the interior of the country is unreliable. We understand that the Embassy has previously contacted the mission on other matters.

Because of adverse publicity in this country involving allegations by former Temple members that they were coerced into transferring property and money to the Temple, we believe it is necessary to verify that the social security beneficiaries whose checks are going to the Mission Village are receiving their social security checks and that no assignment of the right to future monthly payments has been made.

The pertinent law (42 United States Code 407) provides: "...The right of any person to any future payment under this title shall not be transferrable or assignable, at law or in equity."

This law protects the right of social security recipients to receive, endorse, and negotiate their own checks and voids any purported transfer or assignment of the payments. Consequently, we will continue to send social security checks in care of the Mission Village post office box only if it is clear that such arrangement is for the convenience of the beneficiari and does not deprive them of control over their monthly checks. We would appreciate your interviewing at the Mission each of the beneficiaries listed below. They should be requested first to present their identification (each is a United States citizen), and then each should be asked the following questions:

1. Where are you now living?

2. Do you personally receive your social security checks each month?

3. Have you signed a written agreement, power of attorney, or other such document assigning or transferring your monthly social security check to the Mission Village? (If there is such a written agreement, please obtain a copy for the Social Security Administration.)

4. Are you working as an employee of the Mission Village? (If an employment arrangement exists, obtain information as to when the employment began and the number of days each month that services were rendered for the employer. If any beneficiary is age 72 or over, it will not be necessary to inquire about work.)

Ruth Atkins 496-10-9508	Elfreida Kendall 453-28-7761	Elsie Ross 466-12-6011
Marshall Farris 429-05-3245	Charlotte King 568-24-0133	Helen Snell 464-10-8551
Robert Johnson 437-09-0486	Mary Mayshack 435-05-7625	Bernice Thomas 494-30-7132
Rosa L. Keaton 563-30-8822	Eura L. Moses 549-24-7040	
Tommie S. Keaton, Sr. 452-07-3010	Rosey L. Peterson 549-38-5158	

The Embassy should make it clear to each beneficiary that Social Security's concern is that he receives the check to which he is legally entitled. If the Embassy finds that there has been an assignment of benefits, the law prohibiting assignment should be explained to the parties concerned and an arrangement should be worked out for delivery of future checks directly to the beneficiaries. Of course the beneficiaries may, if they wish, give the proceeds of each month's check to whomever they choose, so long as they realize that they retain the option of not doing so, notwithstanding any formal transfer or assignment of future benefits which they may have executed.

Please forward your reply to the attention of the Overseas Program Branch.

Sincerely yours,

TDG/HAK

Ted D. Girdner
Director, Division of
International Operations

ATKINS	Ruth	496-10-9508
FARRIS	Marshall	429-05-3245
KEATON	Rosa	563-30-8822
KEATON	Tommie S., Sr.	452-07-3010
KENDALL	Elfreida	453 28-7761
KING	Charlotte	568-24-0133
MAYSHACK	Mary	435-05-7625
MOSES	Eura L.	549-24-7040
PETERSON	Rosey L.	549-38-5158
ROSS	Elsie	466-12-6011
SNELL	Helen	464-10-8551
THOMAS	Bernice	494-30-7132